

ALASKA TELEHEALTH ADVISORY COUNCIL

March 30, 2001

9:30 a.m. – 3:15 p.m.

Alaska Communications Systems – HR Building

ATAC members present: Paul Sherry, Co-Chair, Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium; John Ayers, Alaska Communications Systems; Denny DeGross, University of Alaska Anchorage, Alaska Center for Rural Health; Mark Johnson, United Utilities (Alaska Telephone Association representative); Marilyn Kasmar, Alaska Primary Care Association; Jerome List, MD; Tom Posey, AT&T-Alascom; Alex Spector, Department of Veterans Affairs; Commissioner Nanette Thompson, Regulatory Commission of Alaska; Mary Weiss, RN, Alaska Nurses Association.

ATAC members absent: Commissioner Karen Perdue, Co-Chair, State of Alaska, Department of Health and Social Services, represented by Bob Labbe; Douglas A. Bruce, Providence Health System in Alaska; Ron Duncan, GCI; Dee Hutchison, Alaska Native Medical Center; Jeff Jessee, Alaska Mental Health Trust; Edward H. Lamb, Alaska Regional Hospital; Mike Powers, Fairbanks Memorial Hospital; Eric Wall, MD, Premera Blue Cross.

ADETC members present: Michael Sfraga, PhD, University of Alaska; Karen Crane, Alaska Libraries, Archives, and Museums; Gaylin Fuller, Fairbanks North Star Borough School District; Joseph McDonald; Chris McNally, Ilisagvik College; Tim Navarre, Kenai Borough; Jason Ohler, University of Alaska; Walter Parker, U.S. Arctic Research Commission; Donna Peterson, Kenai Peninsula School District; Steve Smith, University of Alaska; Jim White, Kenai Peninsula Borough School District.

Participants present: Carl Hild, Institute for Circumpolar Health; Teri Keklak, State of Alaska, Division of Medical Assistance; Debbi Kiley, NP, Alaska Ear Nose & Throat Inc.; Linda Lekness, Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium-AFHCAN; Vonne Mason, State of Alaska, Division of Medical Assistance; Gwen Obermiller, State of Alaska, Division of Medical Assistance; Andrew Solli, Premera Blue Cross.

Staff: Tom Nighswander, MD, MPH, Facilitator; Karen Mitchell, Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium

Guests: Kay Ashton; Kathe Boucha, Providence Health System in Alaska; Martin Cary, GCI; Vonni Carole, Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium; Edward Deaux; Rebecca Grandusky, YKHC; Jim Harpring; Krag Johnsen, Denali Commission; Kaerin Stephen; Janice Troyer, University of Alaska; Penny Vasieff; Anthony Zenk, State of Alaska, Department of Health and Social Services.

Joint ATAC/ADETC Meeting

Introduction and Goals of Meeting

Paul Sherry, ATAC Co-Chair
Michael Sfraga, PhD, ADETC Facilitator

The meeting was called to order at 9:45 a.m. with welcome by Alaska Telehealth Advisory Council (ATAC) Co-Chair Paul Sherry and Alaska Distance Education Technology Consortium (ADETC) Facilitator Michael Sfraga, PhD. The goal for today's joint meeting is to share information so that both groups are aware of each other's statewide telecommunication efforts.

Agenda addition—share information regarding the UAA Fetal Alcohol Syndrome/Fetal Alcohol Effects (FAS/FAE) project.

Overview of Vision and Work

Alaska Distance Education Technology Consortium

Michael Sfraga, PhD, ADETC Facilitator

Dr. Sfraga distributed the ADETC "Interim Report" dated February 21, 2001 for review. Dr. Sfraga stated that the University of Alaska has received a three-year appropriation for Consortium efforts, and they would like to facilitate discussions between the ADETC, ATAC, and the Denali Commission to partner and leverage existing infrastructures within the state.

Discussion items:

- Funding—ADETC has received a three-year appropriation in the amount of \$800,000. Funds will be used to hire staff to review current and future distance education infrastructure needs in the state, and develop a distance education plan for statewide educators. A portion of funds will also be used for projects and travel.

It was shared that Senator Ted Stevens has reviewed the Consortium Interim Report; congressional staff are working on additional funding to continue Consortium efforts.

- Longevity—the Consortium agreed at its last meeting to continue to work on identified issues.
- Interaction with the telecommunications industry—noted that the telecommunications industry was invited to the last Consortium meeting and will continue to be invited to meetings to discuss future relationships.

Alaska Telehealth Advisory Council

Paul Sherry, ATAC Co-Chair

ATAC Co-Chair Paul Sherry presented a brief update on Council activities. Discussion highlights included: review of completed and ongoing Council projects, potential new projects under consideration, and recent statewide telehealth issues that have been identified.

UAA – FAS Project

Information was shared regarding the state FAS/FAE project that is scheduled to begin in October 2002. Project funding received is \$5.8 million over five years. Different agencies within the state will be involved in the project, and the focus will be to assist distance delivery education by addressing FAS/FAE problems in Alaska through intervention teams. A portion of the project funds will be utilized for a social work training academy to develop an FAS/FAE curriculum.

Telecommunication Infrastructure in Alaska

Krag Johnsen, Denali Commission Staff

Krag Johnsen distributed the “Telecommunications Services Inventory of Rural Alaska: Final Database and Report” prepared for the Denali Commission in January 2001 for review. Discussion highlights included: review of background information, results of the completed telecommunications services survey, and the telecommunications inventory database and future plans.

Joint Venture Possibilities

Paul Sherry, ATAC Co-Chair
Michael Sfraga, PhD, ADETC Facilitator

Discussion of joint venture possibilities between the ATAC and ADETC in regard to common interests, connectivity and educational opportunities for professionals and public, and how to accomplish collaborative efforts (finances, communication, and exchange of information).

Discussion items:

- Issues/obstacles—licensing and accreditation opportunities using technology to address staff retention.
- Miscommunications between the telecommunications industry and customers—more affordable bandwidth versus “just” bandwidth
- Sustainable business model—moving forward with business in mind
- Partnering to share resources—coordinate users (cooperation needed from each region) and how to balance costs with the rest of the state (relating to charges, not an access issue)
- Community healthcare/education needs—identify what the community has and barriers (use expertise to recommend solutions)

It was agreed that ATAC and ADETC would brainstorm on ways both groups could work together.

ATAC Meeting

Regulatory Update

Commissioner Nanette Thompson, Regulatory Commission of Alaska

Commissioner Thompson shared information regarding her recent trip to Washington, DC, to discuss coordination issues in the telemedicine industry and sustainability issues. Additional information shared included: future membership changes to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Universal Service Joint Board and upcoming U.S. reforms.

Brief discussion followed regarding Universal Services Funding (USF). For further information visit, www.library.state.ak.us/usf.

Joint Meeting Wrap-up / Comments

Brief discussion of telecommunication technology used in the state (satellites and fiber optic), and the environmental factors involved.

Meeting follow-up plans will include both group's Chairs and staff discussing options within each forum regarding the value of meeting together. An update on discussions will be provided at the June Council meeting.

Reports

ATAC Project Reports

Thomas S. Nighswander, MD, MPH, Facilitator and Project Staff

Dr. Nighswander provided a brief update on Medicaid Reimbursement, Telepsychiatry, and Telemedicine Efficacy Trial project activities.

Vonne Mason, State of Alaska, Division of Medical Assistance, shared specific information for the Medicaid Reimbursement analysis that is being completed by Myers & Stauffer, LC. The project deliverables and timelines have been revised and are as follows:

- Issues for consideration to be completed by April 30, 2001
- Coverage and reimbursement recommendations to be completed by June 30, 2001
- Implementation and evaluation plan to be completed by September 30, 2001.

As soon as the recommendations are reviewed by the State of Alaska, Division of Medical Assistance, they will be posted to the state website, www.hss.state.ak.us/atac. If anyone has comments regarding the recommendations, they may be e-mailed directly to Vonne Mason, vmason@health.state.ak.us.

Interconnectivity and Firewalls

Thomas S. Nighswander, MD, MPH, Facilitator

Dr. Nighswander provided an update on Maniilaq Medical Center's interconnectivity and firewall issues in connecting with the Langdon Clinic, which is now operated by Providence Health System in Alaska. Since the contract relationship between Langdon Clinic and Maniilaq Medical Center is not clear, it was agreed that Dr. Nighswander would facilitate discussions between the Maniilaq Medical Center, the Langdon Clinic, and as needed with the Alaska Federal Health Care Access Network (AFHCAN) Steering Board to assist in resolving interconnectivity and firewall issues.

AFHCAN

Linda Lekness, AFHCAN Project Director, ANTHC

Linda Lekness provided an update on the following AFHCAN activities: deployment of the advanced telemedicine workstations; technical and clinical training for member organizations; FY 2000 and 2001 funding; sustainability planning; program evaluation; and legal issues in regard to the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA), equipment /supplies/software transfers, and the initial investigation of a patent for the state machine software.

New Project Proposals

Discussion of new project proposals for consideration by the Council:

- Alaska clinical providers central server—for the 500 clinical providers in Alaska so that they can network and communicate with one another. The server would be hosted by the Alaska State Medical Association (ASMA), with all providers involved in keeping the database up to date. The state would have access to the database to target specific audiences (bio-terrorism). There are two potential vendors and the cost for the server would range from \$35,000-\$50,000 (does not include funding for training).
- Telemedicine for non-federal locations in Alaska—it has been determined that there are approximately 20-25 sites that do not have telemedicine connection. An assessment using data already gathered by others will be completed to outline involved costs—connection needs (building, both internal/external issues), hardware, software, consultation, and referral needs. The cost to complete the assessment will be \$6,000.

Council members agreed that requests for proposals (RFPs) will be solicited for both projects, in accordance with ANTHC's contracting process. Council members will have the opportunity to review the RFPs, which will be posted to the state website, www.hss.state.ak.us/atac. A report on the status of each project will be shared at the June 1 Council meeting.

American Association for Advancement of Science Arctic Division Meeting, September 2001

Carl Hild, Project Coordinator
Institute for Circumpolar Health

Carl Hild provided a brief update on health initiatives the Arctic Council is working on. An area the Council is focusing on is sustainable efforts; a working group of the Council will be meeting in the future regarding this issue. Information was shared regarding the upcoming American Association for the Advancement of Science, Arctic Division meeting, which will be held in Anchorage, September 13-14, 2001. The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) will hold a Task Force meeting following the Arctic Division meeting, but the meeting will not be open to the public; meeting dates are September 15-16, 2001. For further information regarding the Council visit, www.arctic-council.org.

ATAC Budget Review

Review and discussion of the FY 2001 Council budget expenses and remaining funds for the year (\$70,000). It was noted current projects have not billed for services yet and the staffing line item may come in under budget.

Next Quarter Focus

The next quarter focus will include:

- RFPs will be solicited for the Alaska Clinical Providers server and telemedicine connection of Non-federal locations in the state; the RFPs will be posted to the state website, www.hss.state.ak.us/atac.
- Posting of Medicaid Reimbursement information after it has been reviewed by the State of Alaska, Division of Medial Assistance, on the state website, www.hss.state.ak.us/atac.
- Facilitation of discussions between the Maniilaq Medical Center, Langdon Clinic, and as needed with the Alaska Federal Health Care Access Network (AFHCAN) Steering Board to resolve interconnectivity and firewall concerns.
- Follow-up regarding coordinated efforts between ATAC and ADETC.

The next Council meeting will be June 1, 2001, and will be hosted by AT&T-Alascom.

The Council adjourned the meeting at approximately 3 p.m.